



Tying Teacher Salaries to Test Scores Doesn't Work

1. Performance pay will not improve teaching or learning.

Studies conducted in Tennessee, New York, California and Chicago show that the carrot of higher pay does not lead to better results.

2. "Value added" calculations of teacher effectiveness are highly unreliable.

Many pay for performance systems use student test scores to assess teacher "effectiveness" through a complicated process known as "value added" analysis. But value added methods have proved unreliable. Experts at the National Academy of Sciences and the Economic Policy Institute have cited this unreliability in warnings about the potentially damaging consequences of implementing test-based evaluation systems or merit pay.

3. Performance Pay will not attract strong teachers.

Studies show that while money matters to teachers, working conditions are more important. If performance pay pits teachers against one another, places even greater pressure on test results, and creates doubts about the system's fairness, more teachers are likely to look for other lines of work.

4. Performance pay will lead to more standardized testing and test prep.

If standardized test scores figure into teacher evaluations, the number of standardized tests will grow and pressures to "teach to the test" will increase.

5. There are better ways to boost teacher effectiveness.

When teachers are polled as to the best way to boost their effectiveness, their number one recommendation is to reduce class size – far above any other reform offered, including merit pay. When Finland's leaders sought to improve their students' academic performance, they instituted measures that included reducing class size, boosting teachers' salaries, and eliminating standardized testing. Finnish students now top the world in academic performance.

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